

Argument Opposing the 2011 Proposed Congressional Map

My name is Kevin Heine, and I am from Kentwood, Michigan. My partner is Tom Norton, and he's from Sand Lake, Michigan. We are representing the Independence Caucus of Kent County, a constitutionally conservative political action organization with a current membership of 498 registered voters and a leadership team of 9 people, the two of us included.

You might think that a conservative organization from Kent County would probably be speaking in support of the 2011 congressional district reapportionment, as proposed by the state legislature last Friday. You would be wrong.

A key element of the decennial redrawing of congressional district boundaries is that like communities should be kept together; that's the whole point of the "compactness" standard. While that standard is supposed to be co-equal with all of the other legal standards, in practice compactness often receives the short end of the stick during reapportionment, which is how the practice of gerrymandering has become institutionalized in redistricting legislation.

Governor Snyder made the point frequently during his campaign last year, and has said so frequently since, that the State of Michigan does not recover unless the City of Detroit recovers. However, when I look at this proposed map, I see the exact opposite. I look at the 9th, 12th, 13th, and 14th districts and I see the Michigan Republican Party telling the people of southeast Michigan that they don't count, that they're nothing but pawns to be used in a statewide game of political chess to the benefit of someone who isn't them.

At a total population of 713,777, Detroit just about rates its own congressional district, separate of the rest of Michigan. The city's about 7,800 people too many to meet the population standard, and a split would have to occur somewhere in order to provide Highland Park and Hamtramck with contiguity, but I fail to understand why the entirety of Wayne County is so dramatically misdrawn as to be subdivided among four congressional districts. I mean, since you're going to cut Detroit in two anyway, couldn't you at least have the decency to combine in the remainder of Wayne County, without creatively scrambling in a quarter of Oakland County while you're at it? I can see incorporating the Eight Mile corridor (of both Macomb and Oakland counties) if we're going to divide Detroit into a north district and a south district, but other than that, I cannot conceive of an honestly compact redraw that has more than three districts in Wayne County.

And it's not just in southeast Michigan where this problem occurs. I was born in Flint and raised in Oscoda; I can tell you from first-hand knowledge that Iosco County and Genesee County have virtually nothing in common with each other, yet they are now the north and south ends of the redrawn 5th District. The same concern applies to grouping Kent County and Calhoun County into the redrawn 3rd District. I currently live in the City of Kentwood, and I'm curious as to how we have enough in common with Holland and Muskegon that we rate being included in the redrawn 2nd District (which also cuts the Kent County voting population almost exactly in half).

Another key element of redistricting is that we should think at least ten years ahead when doing our district redraws. The proposed map goes to a great deal of trouble to protect every single incumbent currently sitting in Michigan's Congressional Delegation, with the exception that Peters and Levin are necessarily forced into a primary in 2012. But have we considered that most of the people currently representing Michigan in Congress will probably not be in office a

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decade from now? Why, instead of going out of our way to protect incumbents, are we not drawing districts in a way that encourages new people to prepare themselves as public servants?

I understand that a common interpretation of the Voting Rights Act is that we're supposed to draw minority-in-majority districts where possible. I say "interpretation" because I've read through the VRA a few times, and I don't see the "minority-in-majority" clause in there anywhere. For what my opinion is worth, I view a mindset that somehow requires us to fence people into voting districts according to their skin color as being exactly identical to segregation . . . by this we're essentially telling minorities (and especially blacks) that they're not capable of getting one of "their own" elected to Congress unless they have a numerical majority of voters in the district in question. How is that philosophy not racist on its face?

We don't usually think of it this way, but the voters of Michigan (including racial minorities) back in 2006 approved a state constitutional amendment that permanently outlawed racial segregation in this state. I realize that we do have to substantially comply with the VRA interpretation if it's practical to do so, and I'm pretty sure that any two given Detroit-based districts, no matter how they're drawn, are going to be minority-in-majority. But what I don't get is why we seem compelled to turn southeast Michigan into a spaghetti bowl, deliberately segregating people based on nothing other than the color of their skin, and then trot this garbage out as "proof" that we've protected minority voting access.

Are you going to attempt to convince me that we can't draw more compact congressional districts in southeast Michigan and still comply with the charade of allegedly protecting the minority vote? I am curious as to how you would explain that in a way that will make sense.

This map is telling the Michigan voters one thing: that the incumbents in Congress are afraid of the people they represent. That deliberately redrawing their fiefdoms to ensure their own incumbency is more important than honestly answering to the voters who put them into office.

And that leaves the question of why that's the message that we want to send.

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| Population (as presented in committee hearing) | Congressional District | Population (as verified by ICKC) | Verified Deviation |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| 705,974 | CD – 01 | 705,288 | – 686 |
| 705,975 | CD – 02 | 706,097 | + 123 |
| 705,974 | CD – 03 | 705,992 | + 18 |
| 705,974 | CD – 04 | 701,066 | – 4,908 |
| 705,975 | CD – 05 | 706,673 | + 699 |
| 705,974 | CD – 06 | 706,423 | + 449 |
| 705,974 | CD – 07 | 706,970 | + 996 |
| 705,975 | CD – 08 | 705,030 | – 944 |
| 705,975 | CD – 09 | 685,766 | – 20,208 |
| 705,974 | CD – 10 | 725,045 | + 19,071 |
| 705,974 | CD – 11 | 712,219 | + 6,245 |
| 705,974 | CD – 12 | 705,480 | – 494 |
| 705,974 | CD – 13 | 706,015 | + 41 |
| 705,974 | CD – 14 | 705,576 | – 398 |

The two minority-in-majority districts (majority black voting-age population) are:

- CD-13: as proposed = 55.71 % (verified at 55.6 %)
- CD-14: as proposed = 57.05 % (verified at 56.5 %)

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| Congressional District | Overall Party Voting Loyalty | Presidential Vote 2008 Election | Party Dominance |
|-------------------------------|--|--|------------------------|
| CD – 01 | Democrat – 45.0 % Republican – 55.0 % | Obama – 49.8 % McCain – 48.4 % | Strong Republican |
| CD – 02 | Democrat – 63.4 % Republican – 36.6 % | Obama – 48.1 % McCain – 50.3 % | Strong Republican |
| CD – 03 | Democrat – 39.4 % Republican – 60.6 % | Obama – 49.6 % McCain – 48.7 % | Strong Republican |
| CD – 04 | Democrat – 42.0 % Republican – 58.0 % | Obama – 49.6 % McCain – 48.6 % | Strong Republican |
| CD – 05 | Democrat – 56.2 % Republican – 43.8 % | Obama – 63.0 % McCain – 35.4 % | Strong Democrat |
| CD – 06 | Democrat – 44.0 % Republican – 56.0 % | Obama – 53.1 % McCain – 45.2 % | Strong Republican |
| CD – 07 | Democrat – 42.9 % Republican – 57.1 % | Obama – 50.9 % McCain – 47.4 % | Strong Republican |
| CD – 08 | Democrat – 40.3 % Republican – 59.7 % | Obama – 52.0 % McCain – 46.4 % | Strong Republican |
| CD – 09 | Democrat – 49.8 % Republican – 50.2 % | Obama – 58.2 % McCain – 40.0 % | Toss-Up |
| CD – 10 | Democrat – 40.1 % Republican – 59.9 % | Obama – 48.2 % McCain – 49.9 % | Strong Republican |
| CD – 11 | Democrat – 38.8 % Republican – 61.2 % | Obama – 50.2 % McCain – 48.2 % | Strong Republican |
| CD – 12 | Democrat – 57.7 % Republican – 42.3 % | Obama – 66.9 % McCain – 31.4 % | Strong Democrat |
| CD – 13 | Democrat – 74.4 % Republican – 25.6 % | Obama – 83.3 % McCain – 15.6 % | Strong Democrat |
| CD – 14 | Democrat – 70.5 % Republican – 29.5 % | Obama – 80.6 % McCain – 18.7 % | Strong Democrat |